

Washington State Department of Ecology
Solid Waste Summit
June 1-3, 2004

Background

Historically, the Washington State Solid Waste Summit has been an opportunity for county public works departments to discuss current solid waste issues with the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology). In 1994, representatives from county public works departments met with Ecology staff for one day. In 1999, Ecology convened the "Summit at the Summit" at Snoqualmie Pass for two days. In addition to Ecology and public works representatives, the 2004 Summit held in Ellensburg included public health jurisdictions. The Summit spanned three days.

Desired Outcomes

The Summit Steering Committee designed the agenda (Attachment 1) in collaboration with Dee Endelman of Agreement Dynamics, Inc. The Committee identified the following desired outcomes for the 2004 Summit:

- ◆ Exchange of information and ideas regarding major developments and issues facing solid waste agencies such as regulation changes, legislative issues and budget opportunities;
- ◆ Recognition and celebration of successful local programs throughout the state;
- ◆ A greater understanding of the links among local plans, the state plan and CPG funding;
- ◆ Greater sense of partnership among local solid waste staff, health district staff and state staff;
- ◆ Decisions on how to incorporate JLARC recommendations into CPG funding of local programs throughout the state;
- ◆ Agreement on CPG statewide goals and how to apply them;
- ◆ Priority issues to address together over the next two years.

Welcome and Agenda Review

Cullen Stephenson (Ecology SW&FAP), Jeff Kelley-Clarke (Snohomish County Solid Waste Management), and Wendy Mifflin (Yakima County Public Works), welcomed the group to the Summit, and introduced the lead facilitator, Dee Endelman (Agreement Dynamics, Inc.). Dee introduced the Summit Steering

Committee: Jeff Kelley-Clarke, Jim Matsuyama (Northeast Tri-County Health District), Art Starry (Thurston County Health and Social Services), George Sidles (Ecology SW&FAP), and Kristen Dorwin (Ecology SW&FAP). She explained that the Summit was an open forum for input, and that one of the primary goals of the meeting was to reach agreement on actions to improve the Washington State solid waste system. She introduced the other Summit facilitators, reviewed the agenda for the group, and explained the introduction exercise, in which every seven-person table group found at least one thing that all members had in common. After a short discussion, each participant introduced him or herself, and each table group presented their commonalities.

The State of Solid Waste

Jim Matsuyama, Cullen Stephenson and Jeff Kelley-Clarke presented a panel discussion of current issues in the solid waste arena in Washington State.

Jim Matsuyama gave a brief description of some of the “hot topics” in the solid waste field from a health jurisdiction perspective:

- New composting practices and changes in landfills in response to WAC 173-350 regulations.
- Health departments are shifting to more educational roles.
- Public health emergency response is being tested and improved (e.g. medical and hazardous waste issues due to natural disasters).
- Disposal of animal carcasses is a growing issue.
- He concluded that public health jurisdictions had seen many major changes over the past 30 years and that the Summit would be a good arena to address changes in the Coordinated Prevention Grant (CPG) Program that affect public works and public health jurisdictions.

Cullen Stephenson presented a brief review of some successes over the last 13 years, as well as some current challenges facing the solid waste system:

- Since 1991, Washington has had tremendous success in increasing recycling rates.
- The number of landfills in the state has been reduced from 126 to 21 or 22, and existing landfills are much safer than their predecessors.
- Waste collection systems have improved, drastically increasing overall collection.
- Relationships between stakeholders have been built and strengthened.
 - Ecology served as an effective information broker in the recent B.S.E. crisis.

- Improving the solid waste system has caused some unintended consequences:
 - Waste is “whisked away before we have a chance to think about it.”
 - Disposal has become so safe and easy that we are using resources at record rates, despite increased recycling.
- The Beyond Waste Plans address several of the unintended consequences of Washington’s excellent waste management infrastructure.

Jeff Kelley-Clarke pointed out that partnerships within the state have solved the landfill capacity crisis, but noted that since a crisis no longer looms, decision-makers seem to take less notice of solid waste issues. He highlighted the following solid waste issues:

- Local government funding is a continuing problem, and probably will not rebound with an economic recovery.
- The transition from a three-bin recycling collection system to single-stream collection utilizing large “toters” is causing problems in some communities.
- “Sham recycling” is a growing problem.
- Illegal dumping and litter cleanup are important, yet costly issues.
- Personnel issues within public works departments are still a reality--managers need to remember to address human issues within their organizations.
- Grant programs such as CPG are facing questions such as:
 - How should success be measured?
 - Should they become competitive grants?

After the presentations by Jim, Cullen, and Jeff, the participants asked questions and provided comments about hot topics in solid waste management.

- The group discussed fee-based budgets. According to participants, some county public works departments are trying to transition to fee-based budgets to compensate for the loss of other funding sources. Others cited concerns about fee-based budgets, such as increased illegal dumping and inability to charge for all services.
- One county representative reported that their waste streams had recently increased seven to eight percent per year, while the population increased only two percent per year. Several other county representatives echoed that trend.
- The group briefly discussed product stewardship efforts in Maine and California. Ecology representatives noted that Ecology would be conducting a study on product stewardship over the next two years.
- A participant noted local mercury management as an important issue.

- One participant noted that biosolids should be further examined as an energy source and as remediation material for contaminated soils.
- Several participants discussed contaminated soil issues, including:
 - Relationship-building efforts between Ecology, The Department of Transportation, and the Association of General Contractors.
 - One county representative noted that the WAC 173-350 rules are complex and their development has been lengthy. The fact that the soils section seems to be the only problematic one in the rules is a testament to Ecology's work.
- A participant voiced the opinion that "true costs" should be promoted instead of promoting a bulk-waste mentality.

The facilitator explained that the conversation regarding hot topics and priorities would continue with a prioritization exercise later in the Summit.

The State of the State Plan

Cheryl Smith (Ecology) began the presentation on the state solid and hazardous waste plans (known collectively as the Beyond Waste Plans) by taking an informal survey of the room: the majority of the people in the room had been involved in some way in developing the plans; very few people knew little or nothing about the plans. She listed several avenues through which people could provide feedback on the plans: the Beyond Waste website, comment cards, telephone, at public meetings or by mail.

Cheryl gave a PowerPoint presentation that provided a broad overview of the Beyond Waste Plans (Attachment 2). Cheryl and other Ecology staff then fielded questions and comments from the group.

The State of Our Partnerships

After the presentation on the Beyond Waste Plans, the facilitator tasked each table group to discuss the state of the solid waste partnerships in the state. A volunteer from each table took notes and handed them back to the facilitator at the end of the discussion. The facilitator provided each table group with the following discussion guide:

- Give examples of Solid Waste partnerships that are working well
- What's not working so well in your partnerships?
- What issues are coming up where you're going to need partners?
- What obstacles have you hit in working with your Solid Waste partners?

The table groups discussed the state of partnerships for about 45 minutes. The facilitation team synthesized the resulting notes in the evening for review by the entire group (Attachment 3). In reviewing the results of the discussion, the facilitator commented that several trends emerged from the notes. For example, discussion of what is required for good partnerships could be divided into three categories: interpersonal issues, structural issues, and “big picture” issues, such as political and financial issues. She also noted that the discussion indicated that some folks have had difficult relationships with Ecology, while other have had highly productive relationships. The group discussed this issue briefly with some concluding that the difference resided in the individual staff working together and the quality of their relationships. The facilitator reminded the group that they would be asked to think more about how to improve partnerships later in the Summit.

Overview of the CPG Program

Cullen Stephenson told the group that Joint Legislative Audit Review Committee (JLARC) representatives had been unable to attend the Summit. He explained JLARC’s recommendations to make the CPG program more accountable and competitive. While the original recommendation was to make the grants competitive between jurisdictions, JLARC revised their recommendation to make the grants competitive within jurisdictions, instead.

Cullen praised the efforts of the CPG workgroup and told participants that Ecology hoped to keep them working on CPG program improvements. He also asked for feedback from the Summit attendees regarding the workgroup’s progress.

Kristen Dorwin gave a PowerPoint presentation (Attachment 4) on the draft proposed future CPG goals. She reviewed the tasks of the CPG workgroup during spring, 2004. She explained the timelines for the draft goals: short-term goals refer to the 2008-2009 CPG cycle; long-term goals refer to a 30-year timeframe. Kristen also noted that feedback was welcome regarding the CPG workgroup’s membership.

The group discussed the CPG goals and workgroup. Several participants expressed interest in the purpose of these goals. Members of the CPG workgroup provided several answers: these goals begin lining up Beyond Waste principles with grant funding; the goals give the State an opportunity to measure results of the funded projects; and the ability to show progress may increase legislative approval of funding for the program. Members of the workgroup also clarified that the statewide goals did not necessarily apply to each county; rather, they were to be used as an average of counties statewide. Workgroup members

also emphasized that the purpose of the discussion was to get agreement on goals, as well as feedback that could be used to refine the goals. One participant suggested that Ecology form a listserv to gather feedback on the goals after the Summit.

The facilitator gave the group instructions for breakout discussion sections on the CPG draft goals and gave them directions to the various breakout rooms. The group was split up into three groups of public works participants and two groups of health jurisdiction participants, with Ecology staff present in all five groups. Facilitators from Agreement Dynamics or Snohomish County were provided to each group to record comments and keep discussions on track. The ratings of the draft goals are included as Attachment 5. A complete listing of comments from the groups is included as Attachment 6. A list of new goals suggested by the groups is included as Attachment 7.

After the full group reconvened, they discussed some general issues with the current CPG program. Several participants voiced gratitude for increased simplicity and ease of the CPG reporting system. They also expressed their appreciation for the CPG program in general; it constitutes a large percentage of some budgets and provides flexibility for counties. They appreciate the feedback loop and meetings with grant officers, and would like to see them expanded. Some participants noted that non-competitive grants were essential for their programs' survival.

In addition to the successes of the CPG program, several participants voiced concerns with the program. The supplemental grant process received criticism for a number of shortfalls: not including feedback to denied applicants, unclear expectations, funding delays, delayed distribution of application materials, and apparent lack of timelines for grant issuance. Some participants questioned the funding firewall between health jurisdictions and public works departments. After listening to the comments on the CPG program, an Ecology grant officer acknowledged that the latest grant cycle had been difficult for both counties and Ecology.

Priority Issues to Work on During the Coming Year

Jeff Kelley-Clarke gave a brief overview of the first two Solid Waste Summits, and some of the progress made since the Summits. He noted that during the 1994 Summit, advance disposal fees and the 50% recycling goal were hot topics, and that the group discussed creating an information clearinghouse in the form of a dial-up bulletin board. Jeff also pointed out that the core group of the Solid Waste Policy Forum was formed during the 1994 Summit.

Ecology convened the second Summit in Ellensburg in 1999. Jeff recalled that during the two-day Summit, counties expressed frustration over the CPG Program and that the CPG overhaul was one of the outcomes from the 1999 Summit. The 1999 Summit participants also discussed data measurement, the Public Trust Fund, and the information clearinghouse. After reviewing the past Summits, Jeff introduced Shelly McClure of Ecology, who has recently been working on the information clearinghouse project that came out of the 1999 Summit.

Shelly McClure gave a PowerPoint presentation on the progress of the information clearinghouse project to date (Attachment 8). She explained some of the details of the project, then fielded questions and comments from the group. Several participants offered suggestions for items to include in the clearinghouse, including: past grant applications and supplemental packets to avoid redundancy, links to county websites, and a forum for cost-sharing networks. Shelly also explained that the planning committee welcomed participation from county and health jurisdiction representatives, and that phone and Internet meetings were a possibility.

The facilitator then introduced the table discussion of priority issues. She explained that each table group would create a list of issues that the group believed to need work over the coming years, and that those lists would be used in a prioritization exercise on the morning of the third day. She asked each group to consider the following in their discussions:

1. Hot topics from Day 1;
2. Improving the CPG Program;
3. Improving partnerships and relationships among Solid Waste/Health District staff at local and state levels.

The groups discussed the above topics for about 30 minutes before adjourning for the day.

Decisions Regarding CPG Goals

On the morning of June 3, the facilitators from the breakout sessions reviewed the synthesized results of the CPG goals discussions for the group. The groups' reception of the goals overall was positive, with many of the goals garnering high approval. Other goals were considered workable with changes in wording. A few goals were received poorly, and will most likely be dropped by the CPG workgroup. The groups also suggested a range of new goals for consideration (Attachment 7). The participants also suggested several overall revisions to the CPG Program: CPG goals should be linked to health benefits and/or

environmental outcomes, grant applications should be evaluated on how well they fit with the Beyond Waste Plans, and the CPG program should be used to support local planning and program implementation efforts for comprehensive solid and hazardous waste management plans.

The facilitator explained that these comments would be reviewed and considered by the CPG workgroup while revising the draft CPG goals. The CPG workgroup will make the next iteration of the draft plans available electronically.

Top Priority Issues

The facilitators distributed copies of the top priorities lists that they compiled the previous evening. The steering committee had divided the issues into three categories:

1. Priority Issues – Givens: With respect to these issues, the steering committee considered that they all needed to be addressed and should not be deleted through a prioritization exercise;
2. Issues to Prioritize, which were primarily actions that could be prioritized; and
3. Hot Topics: The broad issues facing solid waste and health programs. The group decided to move some issues from one list to another; the resulting lists are included as Attachment 9.

Dee instructed the table groups to pick their “top 5” out of the second group of issues after a table discussion. The complete voting tallies are included as Attachment 10. Following are the top five priorities, as voted by the Summit participants:

1. Joint voice/lobby/education effort directed at Legislature and other local politicians on funding and other solid waste issues.
2. Funding issues: sources (stable and new), match requirements, firewall, LTCA 60/40.
3. (Tie) Figure out how we’re going to track progress to CPG goals.
3. (Tie) Get message to other audiences (Beyond Waste/priorities) such as the Association of Washington counties, Association of Washington Cities and other financial/policy decision makers.
4. Define true costs of recycling and landfilling.

Workshop Evaluation and Closing

The group reviewed several timeline items for coming months:

- Agreement Dynamics will provide a draft summary of the Summit to the Steering Committee in late June. The Steering Committee will send an email to Summit participants alerting them of the availability of the summary.
- The CPG workgroup will meet in early July and will notify the Summit participants of the timeline for the draft CPG goals by the end of July.
- Ecology will hold a planning meeting for the information clearinghouse in June. Shelly asked participants to contact her directly within two weeks after the Summit if they wanted to be involved in the planning meeting. Ecology expects the information clearinghouse to be online by the end of 2005.
- Cullen Stephenson, Jeff Kelley-Clarke, and Jim Matsuyama will meet to address the top 5 priority goals by the end of July.

Cullen reviewed some of the most notable progress during this Summit:

- Remarkable progress toward consensus on several issues (e.g. the 5 prioritized issues);
- Participants were not afraid to give negative feedback;
- Relationships between counties and Ecology have improved since 1990 (crucial for representation in the legislature).

He also noted some common themes in the discussions during the three days: needs for increased education, incentives, and partnerships, as well as concerns about the transition to the Beyond Waste Plans and the new CPG goals. He also noted the need to improve communication between Ecology and stakeholder groups such as public works and health programs.

After his summation, Cullen responded to some questions from the group about funding timelines by presenting a PowerPoint slide on the CPG grant funding process (Attachment 11).

Members of the Steering Committee commended the participants, presenters and organizers for their hard work and dedication to make the Summit a success.

The participants completed a Summit Evaluation form, the results of which (Attachment 12) were given to the Summit Steering Committee for use in designing the next Summit.